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Summary record of the 276th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 19 August 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Cisternas Reyes

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of the United Arab Emirates (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of the United Arab Emirates (continued) (CRPD/C/ARE/1; CRPD/C/ARE/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11-20

2. **Ms. Ali Hassan** (United Arab Emirates), responding to questions put at the previous meeting, said that the Government had conducted a study to determine the extent to which national disability legislation was in line with the Convention. A draft proposal for the amendment of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, had been completed and was awaiting final adoption.

3. **Mr. Al Shaikh** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Convention did not include a precise definition of disability. As was the case in other countries, the terminology used in the legislation of the United Arab Emirates had its roots in the country's specific language and culture, and it did not necessarily have the same range of meaning as the corresponding terms in English. In legislative matters concerning persons with disabilities, the United Arab Emirates referred to the official Arabic translation of the Convention which, for example, contained no exact equivalent for the English word "impairments". Nonetheless, efforts were being made in that regard and the proposed amendments to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act were expected to contain non-derogatory terminology more in keeping with the English version of the Convention. The data requested by the Committee on the number of persons with disabilities was, in fact, given in paragraph 57 of the State party report (CRPD/C/ARE/1), disaggregated by age, gender and nationality.

4. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that training on assisting persons with disabilities during emergencies was given to public officials including the police, security forces, civil defence personnel and paramedics. A guide had also been prepared for use by persons with disabilities in crisis situations.

5. **Mr. Alhmoudi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Ministry of the Interior had specific plans that catered for persons with disabilities in large-scale evacuations. Such persons were also offered training on how to act in the case of fire or other emergencies. Firefighters had been trained on assisting persons with disabilities while, over the preceding five years, 355 police officers and civil defence personnel had received sign language training.

6. **Mr. Alhammadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that national legislation contained provisions to ensure that persons with disabilities were assisted by interpreters and translators before both criminal and civil courts. Any proceedings that took place contrary to those provisions were null and void. According to law, the translators and interpreters had to be duly qualified and in possession of an official licence. Documents issued by notaries public could be translated into a form that persons with visual impairments could read and understand, according to need.

7. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act defined the role of State institutions for persons with disabilities, which was to provide care, support and an enabling environment to help those persons integrate into society and live independent lives. The Ministry of Social Affairs had signed memorandums of understanding with various institutions with a view to putting the Act

into effect. Pursuant to recent ministerial decrees, licences had been withdrawn from institutions where persons with disabilities were simply boarded. The Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Minors' Affairs had launched an initiative under the slogan "Our life is in our integration" designed to acquaint government agencies and private sector institutions with international best practices.

8. **Ms. Almentheri** (United Arab Emirates) said that a number of organizations and institutions in the United Arab Emirates offered shelter and protection to women with disabilities who were victims of violence. One of the purposes of the league formed in the wake of the Symposium on the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities was to ensure that such women were involved in drafting, implementing and monitoring policies that affected them. Women with disabilities were able to participate in recreational and sporting activities and had competed in sporting events at the international level.

9. **Mr. Al Shaikh** (United Arab Emirates) said that if, during the course of a pregnancy, hospital tests revealed that a child would be born with a disability, the parents were informed. However, forced abortion and forced sterilization were prohibited by law.

10. **Mr. Rashed** (United Arab Emirates) said that, even in cases where there was an elevated risk of a child being born with a disability, such as consanguinity between the parents, no pressure was brought to bear on families to abort a fetus. A number of clubs existed for persons with disabilities where parents could enrol their children and where the latter could be assisted to live fulfilling lives.

11. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that Federal Act No. 10 of 2008, concerning medical liability, and Ministerial Decree No. 294 of 2011 effectively prohibited medical tests being conducted on persons with disabilities.

12. **Mr. Kayyani** (United Arab Emirates) said that child protection efforts included a national abuse hotline, which operated 24 hours a day. Cases were evaluated and those considered to be particularly serious could be referred to an emergency intervention and support service. Training and advice, including legal advice, were available for families, teachers and caregivers. Between 2013 and 2014, the service had intervened in an average of 150 or 160 cases a year. In the first half of 2016, it had intervened in 84 cases.

13. **Mr. Alhmoudi** (United Arab Emirates) said that there were currently 11 persons with disabilities in prison in the United Arab Emirates. They did not suffer discrimination and participated in normal prison life. They received appropriate health care and were provided with assistive technologies, in line with international standards. When amnesties were granted, priority was always given to persons with disabilities.

14. Airports in the United Arab Emirates were equipped with security scanners. However, if their use would be detrimental to a person with a disability, that person could be searched in a private room in the presence of the person accompanying him or her. Dubai International Airport had a human rights office and an office for persons with disabilities where complaints could be lodged.

15. **Ms. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that it was important for security reasons to search all airline passengers, both those with and without disabilities. That was a universal practice among all States. Existing airport scanners in the United Arab Emirates were being replaced with state-of-the-art equipment.

16. **Ms. Ali Hassan** (United Arab Emirates) said that she wished to apologize to Mr. Babu for the incident in which he had been involved at Dubai International Airport.

17. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that there were 72 centres for persons with disabilities in the country, including both State-run and private institutions. They offered diagnostic and early intervention services as well as training, rehabilitation,

treatment and support. Individual sessions for schoolchildren were organized in the evenings.

18. **Ms. Al Marri** (United Arab Emirates) said that persons with visual impairments had been moved from specialized centres to general educational institutions. Teachers there had undergone preliminary training courses on how to deal with such pupils.

19. **Mr. Al Shafeii** (United Arab Emirates) said that all new buildings and facilities met accessibility standards. Local authorities were mandated to supervise the construction of new buildings and were competent to receive complaints and comments from the public about specific buildings or facilities. A maintenance committee reviewed the accessibility of existing buildings. In Dubai, there was a pilot project aimed at bringing the built environment into line with accessibility standards.

20. **Mr. Rashed** (United Arab Emirates) said that regulations guaranteed access to services for persons with disabilities and were enforced throughout the country. Facilities were inspected and measures taken in response to complaints about accessibility. Persons with disabilities were entitled to use the facilities and buildings of their choice.

21. **Mr. Al Zaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said, with regard to the follow-up given to the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, that the establishment of a national commission to investigate allegations of human rights violations was a priority. A ministerial committee was currently carrying out a preparatory study in coordination with national commissions from a number of other countries.

22. **Mr. Alhammadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that any citizen could file a complaint of the violation of constitutional rights with the competent authorities, notably through a public website. A daily radio programme received live complaints and comments from citizens and non-citizens, which were then addressed on air by government officials. Government bodies were fully transparent and accessible.

23. Guardians — usually family members — were appointed for persons deemed not legally capable in order to protect those persons and their assets. If a person with a disability held significant assets, those assets were controlled by a court of law and all financial dealings were supervised in the interests of the individual concerned. Domestic legislation was reviewed and revised regularly, and any derogatory terms used with regard to persons with disabilities were removed as part of that process.

Articles 21-33

24. **Ms. Quan-Chang** asked whether there were any restrictions on the right to marry of persons with disabilities, particularly women and persons with psychosocial disabilities. Noting with concern the prevalence of the specialized education model in the State party, she asked to what extent the State party was investing in bringing about a shift towards an inclusive education system. Lastly, she enquired whether the national human rights institution to be established by the State party would adhere to the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and whether there were plans to set up a separate monitoring body for the Convention.

25. **Mr. Ruskus** asked why children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities were not taught in mainstream schools but in specialized, segregated settings. He would like to know what measures were planned to move from the practice of selective integration in the education system to fully inclusive education, consistent with the Education 2030 Framework for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

26. **Mr. Tatić**, noting that the State party's report appeared to refer to integrated — rather than inclusive — education, observed that the Committee could provide technical

support on all matters relating to the Convention, including the realization of the right to inclusive education. In that connection, he asked whether schools were legally permitted to refuse to enrol a student with a disability. With regard to article 21 of the Convention, he asked how many hours of programming with subtitles and sign language interpreting were broadcast on television each week. Turning to article 32, he enquired how the State party ensured that the international projects it funded were accessible to persons with disabilities and whether it could provide any examples of good practice in that regard. Lastly, he requested more information on access to tourism and cultural sites and activities for citizens and visitors with disabilities.

27. **Mr. Basharu** said that the delegation should inform the Committee of the official status of Braille and indicate whether it was taught to all blind students. He wished to know what measures, including sign language interpretation, were in place to help deaf persons seeking health-care services and what steps had been taken to assist pregnant women with disabilities, such as the provision of accessible beds. The voting procedure outlined in paragraph 287 of the report did not appear to allow persons with disabilities, especially blind persons, to exercise their right to vote in sufficient secrecy. Would the Government consider allowing such persons to vote using a proxy of their choice or an electronic voting method?

28. **Mr. You** Liang, noting the State party's achievements in developing Paralympic sport, asked what efforts it had made to promote the Special Olympics. Turning to article 33, he requested more information on the data-collection systems used in the State party. With regard to article 32, he asked what cooperation the State party had initiated to provide financial and technical support to other States, particularly developing countries and least developed countries, in advancing disability rights, an area in which it claimed to be a leader, and what role it intended to play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. **Ms. Kingston** said that she would be interested to hear the delegation's views on unified Arabic Sign Language, which was used in television broadcasts in the United Arab Emirates despite the fact that Emirati Sign Language was reportedly better understood by deaf persons in the State party and enjoyed official recognition. With regard to article 23, she wished to know what support networks were in place for the parents of children with disabilities. Noting the existence of separate schools for deaf children, blind children, children with intellectual disabilities and children with autism, she asked whether the delegation considered those segregated schools to constitute a form of discrimination. Concerning article 28, she enquired how the right to social security was being implemented in the case of migrant workers who acquired disabilities while working in the State party. Given the lack of data on children with disabilities in the State party, she would be interested to how target 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals would be achieved. Lastly, the delegation should indicate how disability rights were being mainstreamed into the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in that process.

30. **Mr. Al-Tarawneh** suggested that the relevant bodies in the State party should revisit the issue of statistics on persons with disabilities. He noted that there were discrepancies in the implementation of the Convention at the federal and local levels, with Dubai and Abu Dhabi making more progress than the other Emirates. The State party should address the matter. He would like to revert briefly to article 12. While it was commendable that the State party would print paper money in Braille, it was not clear to the Committee whether a blind person could open a bank account at any bank without restriction or if, in some cases, the presence of a guardian was required.

31. **Mr. Babu** said that he was grateful for the delegation's response to the experience he had related at the previous meeting. Nonetheless, the aim of sharing that information had not been to elicit an apology but rather to highlight the need for immigration and security authorities in the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere to make greater accommodation for persons with disabilities.

32. It was important, despite deep-rooted religious and cultural influences, to work to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, overcome stereotypes and promote appreciation of the diversity of the human race. The State party report indicated that there were no restrictions on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political life. He would like to know if any statistics were available on the number of persons with disabilities who were members of the various constitutional institutions and of the political bodies at the federal and local levels. Did any member of the royal family have a disability?

33. **Mr. Langvad** said that the Committee was interested in learning more about how teachers were trained in the concept of inclusive education and the provision of reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities in mainstream schools. He would welcome information on the steps that were being taken to increase social welfare benefits to assist persons with disabilities to cover their living expenses and those of their families and to achieve an adequate standard of living. The State-owned airline had provided him with very satisfactory service in the past, and the State party was to be commended for that.

34. **The Chair** said that, owing to time constraints, she had not been able at the previous meeting to put questions under articles 11 to 20 of the Convention; she would do so now. While it was impressive that the United Arab Emirates was ranked forty-first in the Human Development Index, the Committee considered that implementing standards to ensure to persons with disabilities a life free of violence and punishment would enable the State party to improve its ranking still further. Corporal punishment of children was only prohibited in schools, according to the information received by the Committee. It was not specifically prohibited in the home, nor was there specific legislation to prohibit domestic abuse. The introduction of legislation to outlaw both those phenomena would be especially appropriate given that the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children was being implemented in the State party. The Committee was keen to know if there were any such plans. It also wished to know what was being done to implement Sustainable Development Goal 3, on well-being for all.

35. With regard to article 14, she asked whether the normal procedures were implemented when a person with a psychosocial or intellectual disability was accused of committing a crime or whether the individual concerned could be declared unfit to stand trial. If a person was declared unfit, what safeguards were in place to protect him or her?

36. Turning to article 27, she asked how its provisions were applied to foreign migrant workers with disabilities in the State party, whether those workers were able to contribute to their own pension fund and how the efforts to apply the article were linked to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 8.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

37. **Mr. Al Kamali** (United Arab Emirates) said that the State placed great emphasis on supporting those who had a family member with a disability. Collective wedding ceremonies were organized every three years for persons with disabilities and the couples received an allowance to pay for a honeymoon. All married persons with disabilities enjoyed certain privileges and benefits, such as access to low-rent or adapted housing and to subsidies. In addition, specially imported equipment was provided. For example, hard-of-hearing mothers received a special vibrating device to alert them when their baby was crying.

38. **Ms. Ali Hassan** (United Arab Emirates) said that the priority of the country's 2021 Vision was to have high-quality education and health-care systems and a sophisticated infrastructure, including for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

39. **Ms. Al Marri** (United Arab Emirates) said that, under the 2021 Vision, a strategy had been adopted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development to promote inclusive education. Awareness-raising campaigns had been launched to foster the integration of persons with disabilities in the education system, and guidelines in that regard had been produced and applied in private and public schools. The first early intervention centre had been set up in Sharjah. Special programmes had been introduced under which the needs of children with disabilities were assessed and teachers were then provided with the necessary training to meet those needs. Schools were monitored to ensure their compliance with the inclusive education strategy and to evaluate the accommodations made for students with disabilities. In addition, schools were provided with special allowances to purchase assistive equipment and organize training. Some 66 per cent of teachers had received training on meeting the special needs of students with disabilities.

40. Concerning the choice of schools for children with disabilities, a programme was in place to evaluate their needs and then place them in an appropriate facility, subject to availability. Where appropriate, school curricula could be adapted to meet children's needs. In mainstream schools, the number of students with disabilities was limited to six per class. Those students requiring special care, some 428 in all, were assigned to specialized classes, of which there were 48. There were also 453 classrooms tailored to the needs of children with disabilities. All children were provided with support and assistance regardless of the type of disability. The needs of approximately 1,300 students were currently being assessed. A pilot scheme, with 10 special inclusive schools, had been launched in 2008. The teachers in those schools had been provided with special training. The Government's objective was to ensure that all schools were inclusive in the future. There was no special housing provision for children with disabilities; rather they were housed with their parents.

41. With regard to the allegation that children with disabilities were being kept at home and denied access to education, it should be noted that school attendance was mandatory and that the authorities coordinated with parents to ensure that the needs of their children were properly catered for. State-of-the-art equipment was provided to facilitate communication for students with disabilities. In addition, special buses were provided to transport children with disabilities, and schools were fitted with lifts and special toilets.

42. An advisory committee on persons with disabilities had been set up, bringing together various government ministries, to improve services for persons with disabilities in the education system. The advisory committee had worked to ensure that institutions at all levels of education, from kindergarten to university, were suitably equipped to meet the needs of learners with disabilities.

43. In Sharjah, persons with disabilities were provided with scholarships, whether or not they were citizens. A major project was being implemented in universities to train assistant professors to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities. There was also a programme providing scholarships to send students to study abroad in order to specialize. One student with Down syndrome had graduated from the United Arab Emirates University.

44. **Ms. Almentheri** (United Arab Emirates) said that, as a parent of children with disabilities, she could confirm that various types of government support were available. Her children had benefited from early intervention. They were now integrated into mainstream schools and received psychological and social assistance, which was provided in cooperation with organizations such as the Zayed Foundation. The United Arab Emirates was developing a strategy, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund and

organizations representing persons with disabilities, to protect the rights of children with disabilities.

45. **Mr. Al Kamali** (United Arab Emirates) said that there were numerous local dialects of sign language in the country, all using different terminology, and that harmonizing sign language at the national level therefore presented a challenge. To address that problem, a committee comprising representatives from all seven Emirates had been set up and met once a week to take decisions on appropriate terminology and translations, with the objective of producing a standardized national sign language. The final version, expected to be available the following year, would be disseminated to various specialized education centres. News programmes and documentaries would then be interpreted into that sign language.

46. There was a large number of television channels in the country. It was planned to have at least one dedicated channel for persons with disabilities in the future. Currently, a number of programmes were broadcast specifically for persons with disabilities. Once more detailed statistics were available on that topic, they would be submitted to the Committee. Awareness-raising campaigns on television and radio and in other media were developed in consultation with persons with disabilities.

47. If a disability was detected in a young child, the child would be referred to specialist care and would be assessed with a view to treating the disability or, failing that, providing the child with training in, for example, sign language or Braille. Efforts were being made to ensure that there was a smoother transition into mainstream schools for children with disabilities, with the help of international experts.

48. **Mr. Al Zaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Government allocated 1.26 per cent of the gross domestic product, significantly above the recommended 0.7 per cent, to official development assistance. It had made generous contributions to various initiatives, for example the funds allocated to assisting refugees in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the US$ 195 million donated to the World Health Organization, the US$ 164 million set aside for tolerance and intercultural dialogue initiatives and the US$ 125 million for combating malaria. Moreover, it had allocated US$ 33 million to vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan, US$ 10 million to stabilization projects in Iraq and was funding refugee support centres in Jordan, providing additional medical supplies on request.

49. **Mr. Rashed** (United Arab Emirates) said that the programmes the Government supported in the State of Palestine provided specialized mobility equipment for some 5,000 persons with disabilities there. Efforts were also being made to reach the estimated 40 million persons with visual impairments worldwide by developing diagnostic equipment. The Emirates Disabled Sports Federation provided specialized sporting equipment for sportspersons with disabilities worldwide. His country had been involved in the Paralympic Games since the 1980s, seeking to strengthen the self-confidence of sportspersons with disabilities. Several championships had been organized over the past decade, including for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities as part of the Special Olympics movement. There would be 14 sportspersons with disabilities from the United Arab Emirates competing at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

50. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Ministry of Health had a policy in place to provide for all the needs of pregnant women with disabilities. Sign language interpretation and other services were available in hospitals, and all requests made were met positively and expeditiously. The Middle East's biggest trade fair of medical and technological equipment for persons with disabilities was held annually in the country, enabling hospitals nationwide to ensure that they could make state-of-the-art facilities available to patients with disabilities.

51. **Mr. Al Shaikh** (United Arab Emirates) said that data collected by the National Bureau of Statistics during the 2005 census had provided information on the number of nationals and non-nationals with disabilities. However, the figures were no longer completely accurate. A nationwide data-collection project currently under way in readiness for the issuance of national identity documents would provide up-to-date statistics on the number of persons with disabilities living in the country, nationals and non-nationals alike, and those data would be disaggregated by type of disability.

52. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that all persons with disabilities in the country could apply for smart maps, which were delivered to their homes on receipt of the relevant request.

53. **Mr. Alhammadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that, in accordance with the provisions of article 60 of the Criminal Code, anyone who, at the time of commission of an offence, was incapable of exercising discernment or volition owing to insanity or a mental disorder could not be held criminally responsible and was entitled to legal protection from criminal prosecution. In addition, if the perpetrator of a crime could be proved to have a disability, that was considered to be a mitigating circumstance and had a bearing on the sentence. Persons who appeared before the courts had to provide medical records demonstrating that they were unfit to plead or were not legally responsible. In some cases, doctors were called in to examine such persons and provide an expert opinion on the person's alleged disability.

54. In 2016, a law had been passed criminalizing all acts that could jeopardize a child's physical or psychological integrity, including neglect. For the first time in the United Arab Emirates, the law contained definitions of the terms "neglect", "violence" and "ill-treatment", and criminalized the act of abandoning a child in an institution for no good reason. The new law also provided for protection mechanisms, including the child protection unit, which was empowered to receive reports of violence against or abuse of a child. All persons who came into contact with children, including doctors and teachers, were duty bound under the law to report suspected cases of violence against or abuse of children. The penalties for perpetrators were particularly severe if the victims were under the age of 14. The same law applied in cases where adults with disabilities were victims of violence or abuse, as they were considered to be unable to protect themselves.

55. **Mr. Al Shaikh** (United Arab Emirates) said that the minimum age of criminal responsibility was 7. That age was raised to 9 in the law on juvenile delinquency. If a criminal act that was committed could be attributed to mental illness or to disability, the prosecutor or judge could request that the perpetrator be transferred to a care centre and not face trial.

56. **Ms. Bin Suleiman** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Central Bank had issued a circular requiring all bank employees to assist persons with disabilities in opening and maintaining bank accounts and obtaining loans and other forms of credit. The aim was to ensure that all persons with disabilities could make use of banking services on the same footing as persons without disabilities.

57. **Mr. Al Kamali** (United Arab Emirates) said that all workplace accidents and cases of illness at work were the responsibility of the employer, who must provide adequate care for the employee concerned. Employees had the right to sick leave and hospitalization for up to six months, and to financial compensation until they returned to full health. If there was a disagreement about when an employee was fit to return to work after an illness or accident, the objective opinion of a doctor was sought.

58. **Ms. Ali Hassan** (United Arab Emirates) thanked the Committee members for their comments and questions. The fruitful dialogue would benefit the delegation's future work. The Government was determined to work tirelessly to incorporate the Committee's

concluding observations into its projects and programmes. The aim of the United Arab Emirates was to become a world leader in terms of providing for the well-being of persons with disabilities

59. **Mr. Al-Tarawneh** (Country Rapporteur) said the Committee understood that moving from a medical and charity model of disability to a rights-based model was challenging. At the same time, 10 years after the Convention's entry into force, it expected States parties to have taken action congruent with that paradigm shift. The delegation had informed the Committee about the adoption of numerous laws and plans concerning infrastructure, telecommunications, early diagnosis, prevention, rehabilitation and women's empowerment, among other areas. In order to make further progress, however, there was a need for self-evaluation on the part of the State party to identify weaknesses and areas for improvement in the situation of persons with disabilities. Much as the delegation had indicated that that was not the case in the State party, there was no country in the world where women and men were fully equal in practice, where women with disabilities were not disadvantaged in relation to non-disabled women, or where the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and migrants were protected to the same level as the rights of others.

60. He hoped that the dialogue would assist the State party to begin to engage in earnest introspection and continual assessment in order to bring about the system-wide change of approach and attitudes required by the Convention. The fact that the State party continued, supported by its legislation, to practise substitute decision-making, treat men and women unequally, segregate children with disabilities in separate schools and deny persons with disabilities the right to vote, to marry and to give and refuse free and informed consent signalled that the system-wide change had not yet been fully triggered. Such change was compatible with all cultures; it was about achieving inclusion to make all communities stronger and ensure that no one was left behind.

61. Such change began with the recognition that States needed to enter into a partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in order to support persons with disabilities to carry out their activities independently. One way to facilitate the process was the establishment of an independent monitoring body, as required under article 33 of the Convention. That should be seen not as a burden on the State party, but rather as a means to help ensure respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. The Committee therefore welcomed the news that a national human rights institution would be established in the State party. It encouraged the Government to ensure from the outset that the institution fulfilled the Paris Principles and that it worked closely with independent organizations of persons with disabilities.

62. Lastly, he called on the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.